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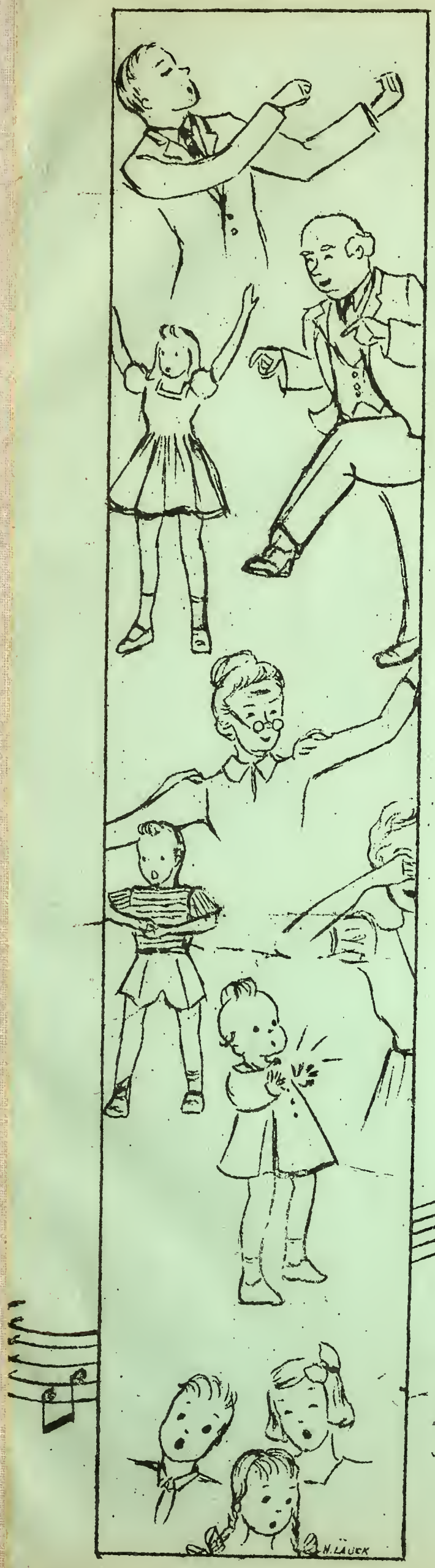
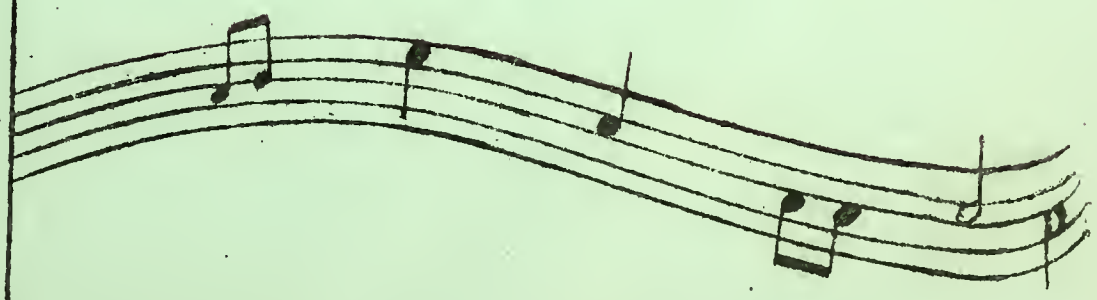



# ACTION SONGS



NATIONAL RECREATION ASSOCIATION
315 FOURTH AVENUE - NEW YORK CITY

## ACTION SONGS

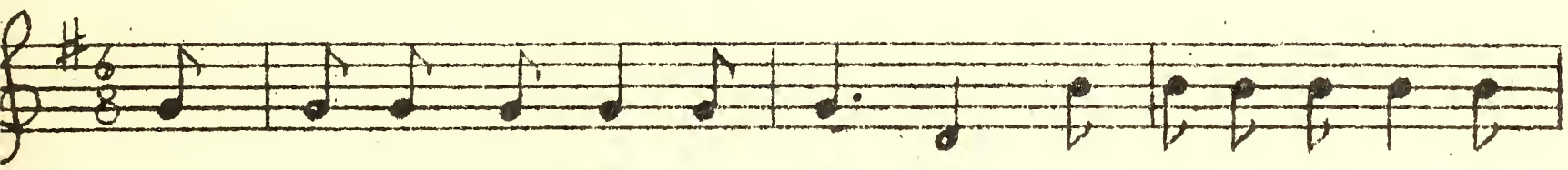
Some of our most popular and familiar action songs are included in this ulletin. There are many others that might have been added such as the musical rench-Canadian, "Alouette." Another song in this classification is the popular Old MacDonald Had a Farm." Like most of these songs it should be used sparingly est it become an old story to the group.

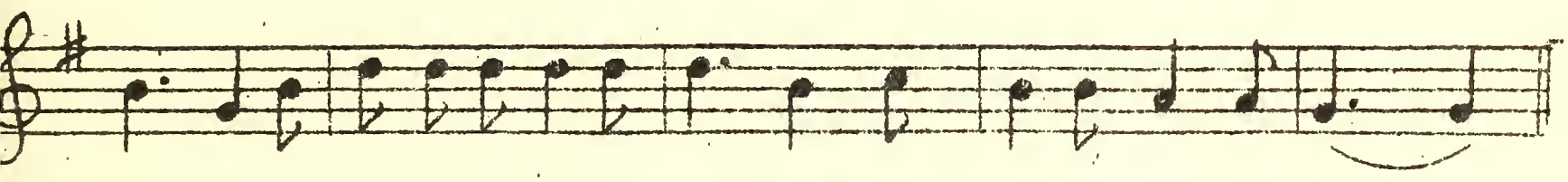
These songs are brought together particularly because they can be used with arge groups, when space is limited, and in situations where people cannot move round. They are also a good method of relief from too much "plain" singing.

### ONE FINGER, ONE THUMB

A stunt song with lots of action

Words accompanied by gesticulation with fingers, thumbs, stamping of feet, tanding up, turning around and sitting down actions. Each verse progressively adds ne new motion.





One finger, one thumb together
One finger, one thumb together
One finger, one thumb together
Together all the time.

Two fingers, two thumbs together (Repeat three times)
Together all the time.

Two fingers, two thumbs, one leg together (Repeat three times)
Together all the time.

Two fingers, two thumbs, two legs together (Repeat three times)
Together all the time.

Two fingers, two thumbs, two legs, stand up, sit down together (Repeat three times)
Together all the time.

Two fingers, two thumbs, two legs, stand up, turn around, sit down together (Repeat three times)
Together all the time.

215571

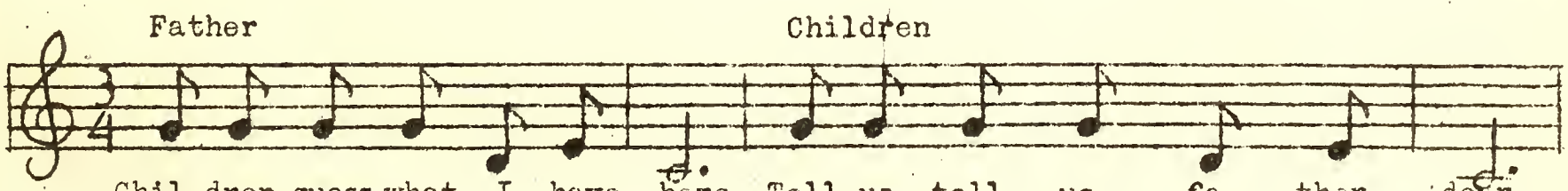
## *SHUSTI-FIDLI

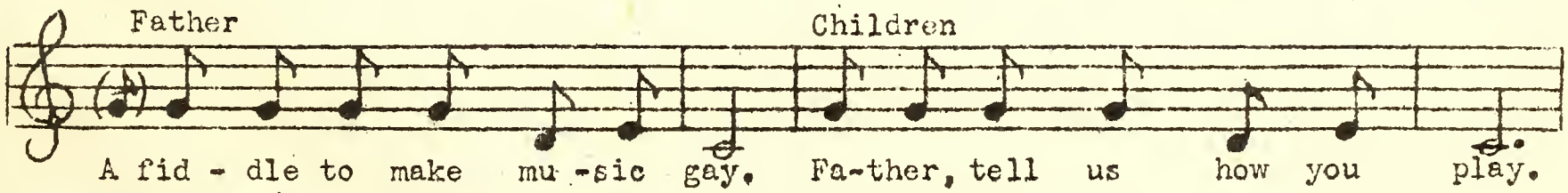
The game song, "Shusti-Fidli," comes from Czechoslovakia. In singing "Shusti-Fidli" the gestures are the most important matter. The violin, tucked snugly under the chin, should be played with vigor and rhythm; the clarinet must be a clarinet, not a piccolo; the trumpet, played between cupped hands, gives a fine brassy blare; the bass viol, played standing, of course, requires different bowing than the violin; the harp, remember, has pedals and is especially effective when graceful arpeggios are swept from its strings; the drums and cymbals release a lot of energy--boom! for the bass drum, ching! for the bright clash of cymbals, and the rolling drrrrr! of the snare drum. The climax is arrived at rather breathlessly, with a final sweep of the violin bow on a high note.

The verses of the song are given below. The first verse and all the choruses are given with the music. The opening two lines are repeated for each verse before the new instrument is introduced.

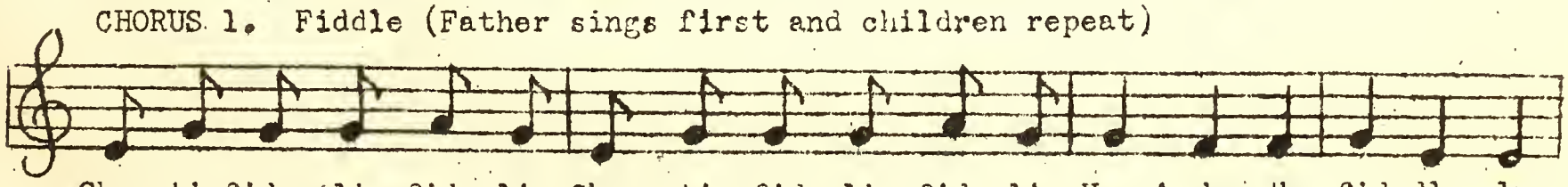
FATHER: Children, guess what I have here.
CHILDREN: Tell us, tell us, Father dear.
1. FATHER: A fiddle to make music gay,
CHILDREN: Father, tell us how you play.
2. FATHER: A clarinet with silver on it,
CHILDREN: Show us how you play upon it.
3. FATHER: A trumpet fine on which to blow.
CHILDREN: Show us how you make it go.
4. FATHER: A fine bass viol here for you.
CHILDREN: Show us how to play that too.
5. FATHER: A golden harp with colored strings.
CHILDREN: Show us, Father, how it rings.
6. FATHER: A big bass drum and cymbals round.
CHILDREN: Show us how you make them sound.

After each new instrument, all the preceding instruments are repeated in reverse order; for instance, after chorus 4, add choruses 3, 2, and 1. The two endings of the drum chorus are sung to the lower notes on the last line of the music; the higher notes are for the second ending of the fiddle chorus with which the song ends.

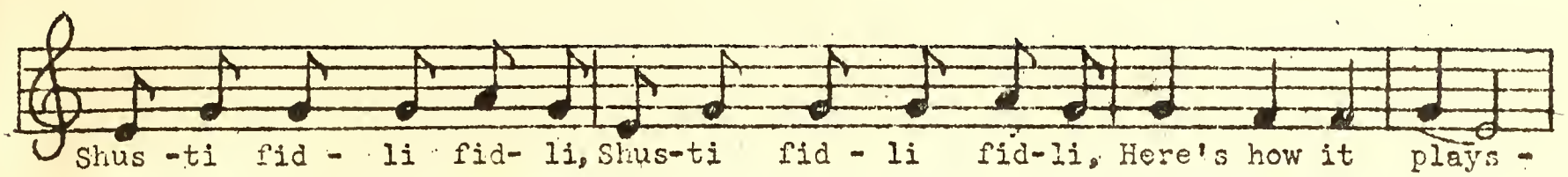


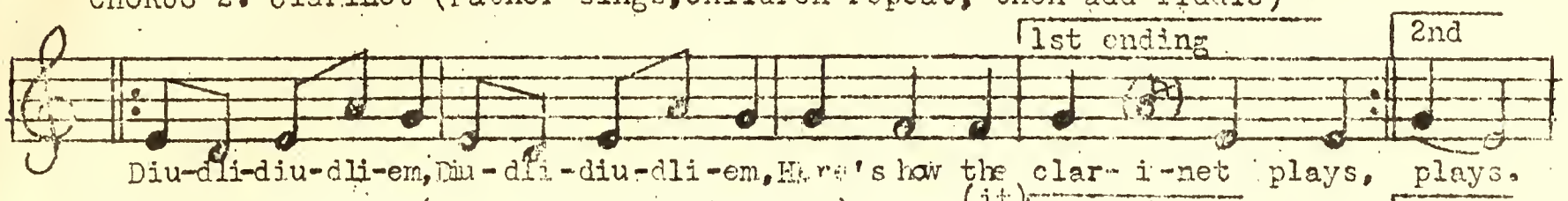

CHORUS 1. Fiddle (Father sings first and children repeat)



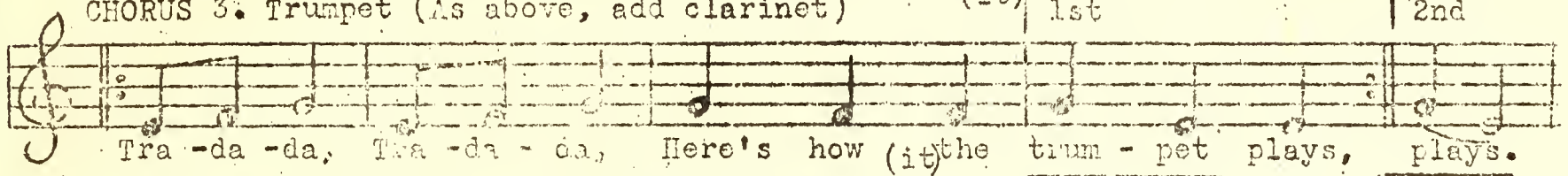

*From "Sing Together." Used by permission of Girl Scouts, Inc.



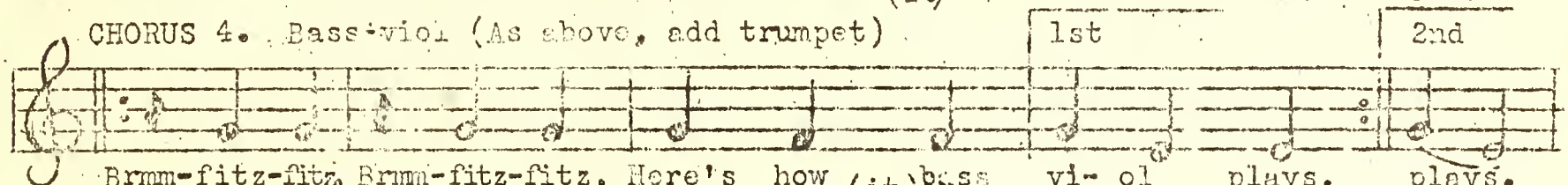

CHORUS 2. Clarinet (Father sings, children repeat, then add fiddle)



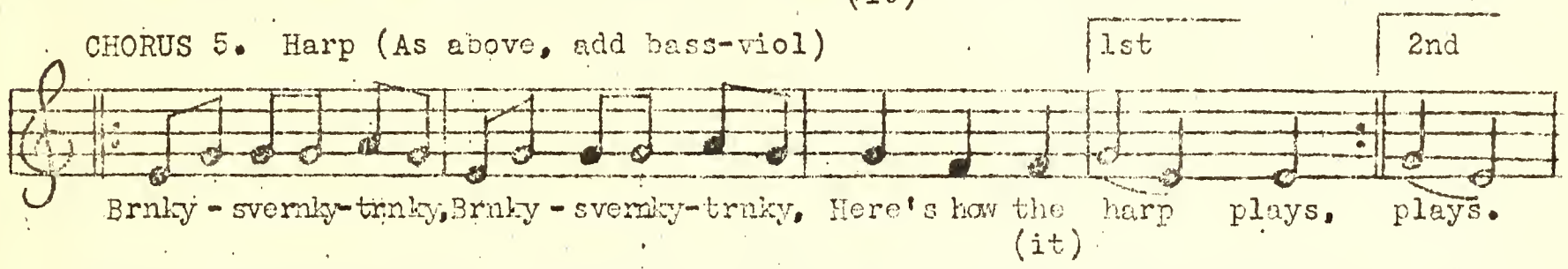

CHORUS 3. Trumpet (As above, add clarinet)



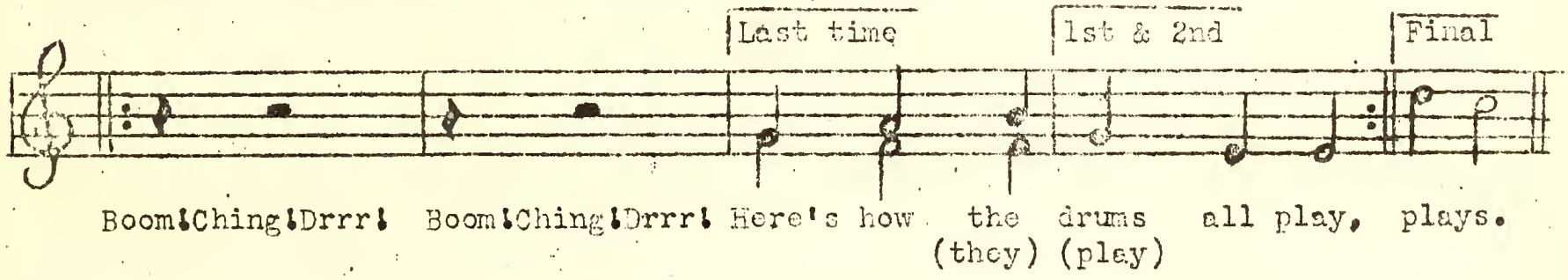

CHORUS 4. Bass-viol (As above, add trumpet)



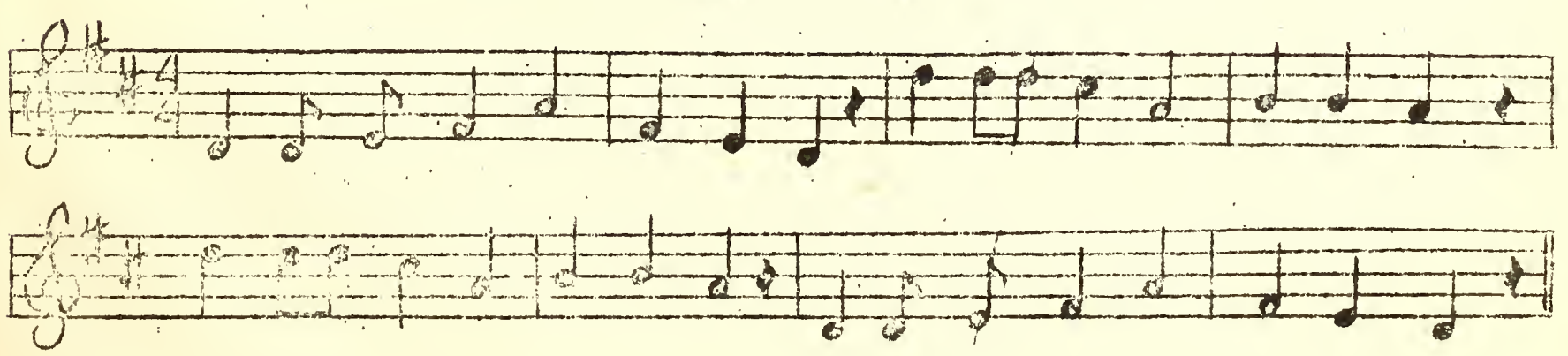

CHORUS 5. Harp (As above, add bass-viol)




CHORUS 6. Drums, etc. (As above, add harp) Last time end with fiddle.




## UNDER THE SPREADING CHESTNUT TREE*



Under the spreading chestnut tree,
When I knelt upon my knee,
We were happy as could be
Under the spreading chestnut tree.

*From "Parodology." Used by permission of Abingdon - Cokesbury Press.

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Repeat the song, substituting appropriate motions for the following words: "spreading" (spread arms), "chest" (smite chest with both hands), "nut" (pat head with hands), "tree" (arms close to side, bent upward from elbow, hands spread with palms up), "knee" (strike knee with hand).

If preferred, the leader can have the singers drop these words one at a time, taking them in the following order: "tree," "nut," "chest," "spreading," and "knee."

## MISTRESS SHADY

Tune: "K-K-K-K-aty"

Oh Mistress Shady, she is a lady,
She has a daughter whom I adore.
Each day I court her,
I mean the daughter,
Every Sunday, Monday, Tuesday Wednesday, Thursday,
Friday, Saturday, Sunday afternoon at half-past four.

Sing in seven groups all seated. Each group rises quickly, sings its name (Monday, etc.) in turn and sits down.

## OH, CHESTER

Tune: "Yankee Doodle"

Sing slowly until everyone gets the actions, then sing two or three times, each one faster than the last.

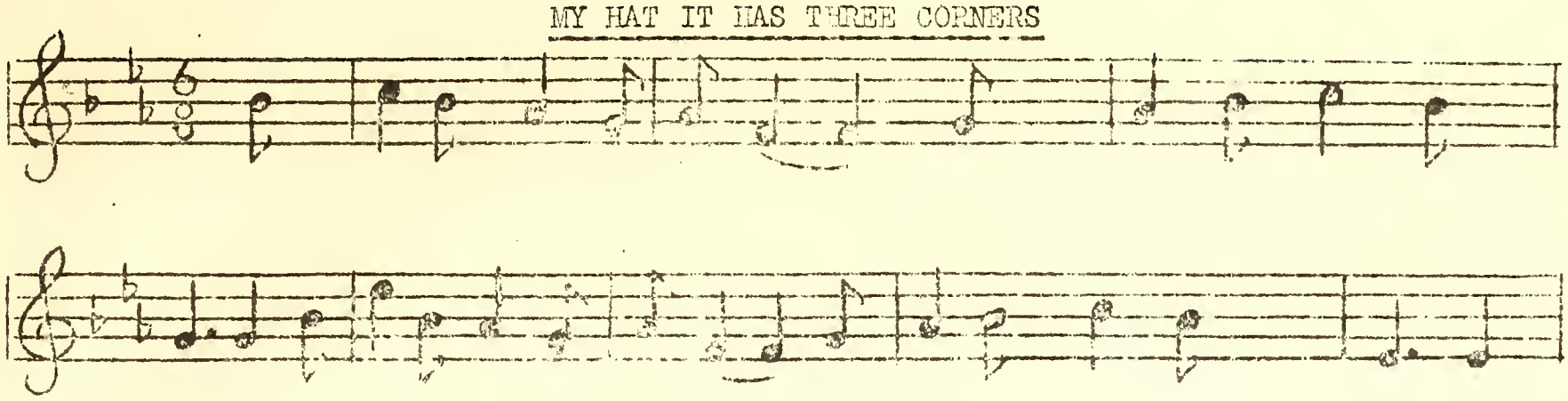
Oh, Chest-er have you 'ear'd about Har-ry?
(On "Chester," put your right hand to your chest; on "ear'd" to your ear; and on "Harry," touch your hair.)

He's chest got back from the arm-y.
(With your right hand touch your chest on "chest"; your back on "back"; and on "army" cross your arms, touching first your left arm between the elbow and shoulder with your right hand, and then your right arm with your left hand.)

I ear'e knows how to wear a rose.
(On "I" point to your eye with your right hand; to your right ear on "ear"; to your nose on "knows"; and on "wear a rose" put both hands over your heart.)

Hip, Hip Hooray for the army.
(Touch your right hip with your right hand on the first "Hip"; your left hip with your left hand on the second "Hip"; wave your right hand in the air on "Hooray," and on "army" repeat the same action as described previously for this word.)

MY HAT IT HAS THREE CORNERS



My hat it has three corners
Three corners has my hat
And had it not three corners
It would not be my hat.

Sing through once; on repeating leave out the word "hat" but touch head as if tipping hat. Next time do as before, but also leave out word "three" and hold up three fingers.

Next - as before but leave out word "corners" and touch elbow. Finally leave out word "my" and point to self.

Anyone singing a word that should be silent may be made to pay a forfeit or to sing it through perfectly while facing the group.

PUSSY

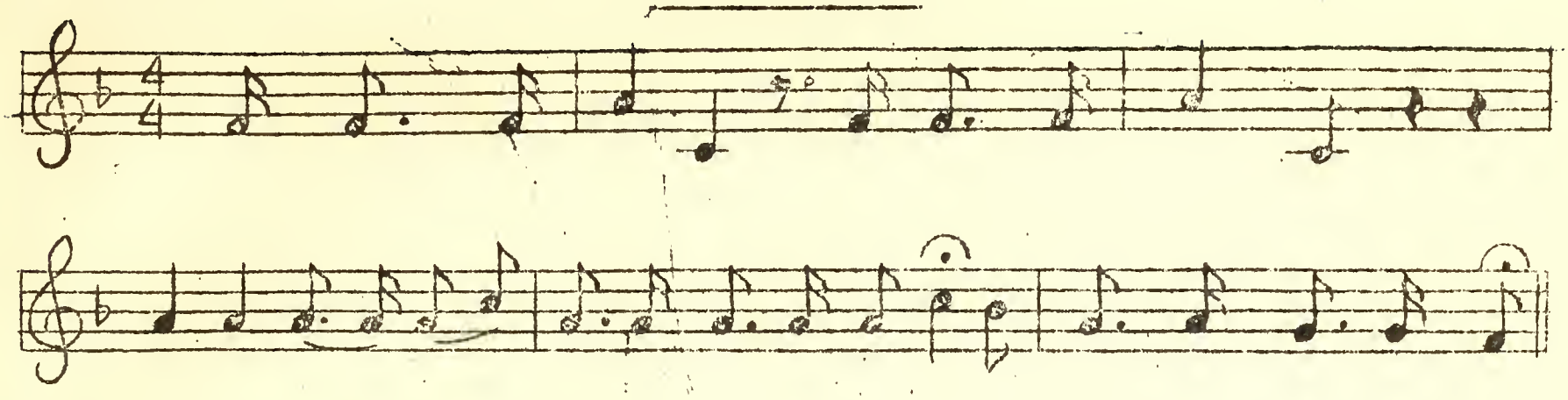
I have a little pussy (indicate small size with hands)
Her coat is silver grey. (motion to clothes)
She lives down in our meadow (point with right hand toward right)
And never runs away. (extend left hand to left and shake head)
She'll always be a pussy (small size)
She'll never be a cat. (large size and shake head)
Her name is pussy willow (left hand on hip, shake right hand, finger pointed)
Now what do you think of that? (throw up both hands in exclamation)

Meow, meow, meow, meow, meow, meow, meow, meow, snap fingers bringing hands down from over head close to sides)
Scat! (move both hands sharply to sides, palms down)

Sing up the scale, each line on a note , Come down the scale on "meows." Divide players into two groups. Have one start at bottom of scale and go up, then come down on the "meows" have the other start at the top, and come down, then go up on the "meows."

As a relief exercise, sing while slowly rising from seats, bring hands up in front until players are standing on tip toe and stretching arms and fingers high in air, then sit by jerks on the "meows," while snapping fingers, and bringing hands down to lap.

TODAY IS MONDAY



The singers should be seated for this song. Divide them into seven groups, each group representing a day of the week. Whenever the days are mentioned during the song, each group rises and sings its own part, while the others remain seated. All join in the chorus, singing it while seated. After the second verse, and from then on throughout the song, the last line in each of the preceding verses is repeated in reverse order before the chorus is sung.

First Verse: (Monday group rises and sings.)
Today is Monday
Today is Monday
Monday wash day

Chorus: (Everyone sings.)
All you hungry brothers, we wish the same to you.

Second Verse: (Tuesday group rises and sings.)
Today is Tuesday
Today is Tuesday
Tuesday string beans
(Monday group rises and sings.)
Monday wash day.

Chorus: (Everyone sings.)
All you hungry brothers, we wish the same to you.

Third Verse: (Wednesday group rises and sings.)
Today is Wednesday
Today is Wednesday
Wednesday sou-up
(Tuesday group rises and sings.)
Tuesday string beans
(Monday group rises and sings.)
Monday wash day.

Chorus: (Everyone sings.)
All you hungry brothers, we wish the same to you.

---

Thursday roast beef
Friday fish
Saturday pay day
Sunday church (sing slowly)

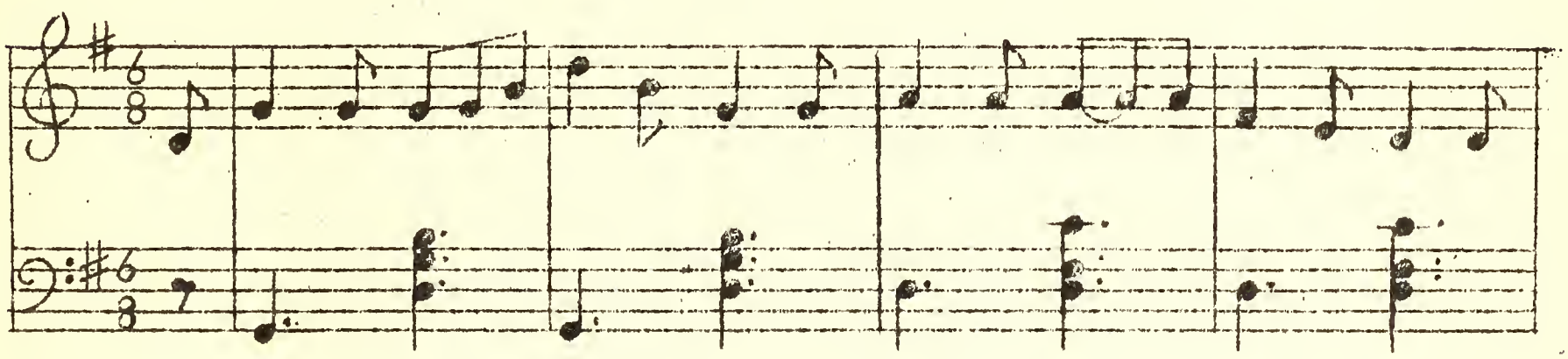
NOTE: Following actions can also be added: Monday (motions of rubbing on washboard; Tuesday (action of stringing beans); Wednesday (using large spoon for soup); Thursday (cutting meat with cleaver); Friday (place right hand in back of left hand, thumbs extended to sides and move thumbs as fins); Saturday (count money); and Sunday (clasped hands).

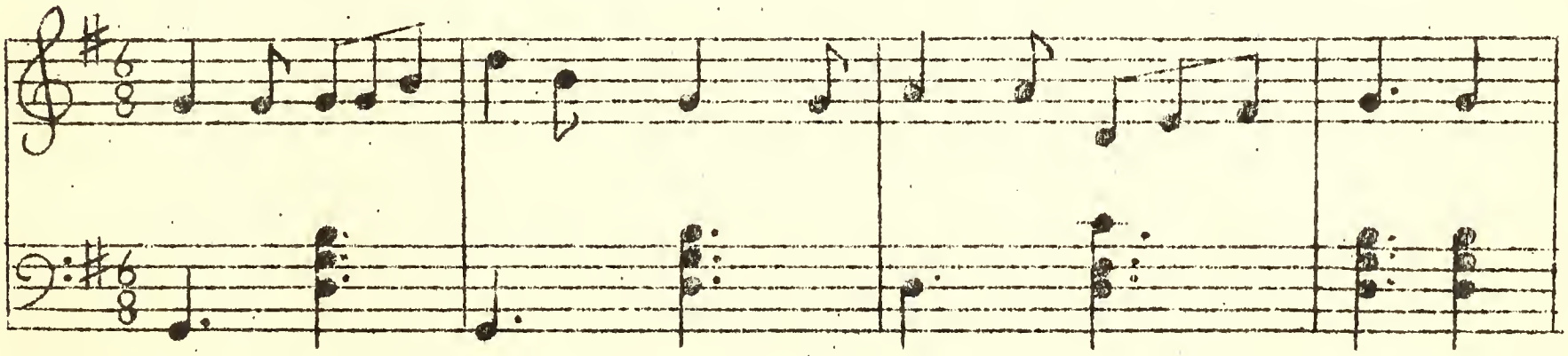
## WE ALL CLAP HANDS

"My head - my shoulders - my knees - my toes
My head - my shoulders - my knees - my toes
My head - my shoulders - my knees - my toes
We all clap hands together."

As the song is sung, the hands are placed first upon the head, then shoulders, then knees, then toes. At "We all clap hands together," all clap hands.

Change the words around, such as "My toes, my knees, my shoulders, my head -- My head, my shoulders, my knees, my toes." Change the tempo as you see fit.





## LITTLE PETER RABBIT

Sung to the tune "Battle Hymn of the Republic"

Little (indicate size) Peter (hands on chest like a rabbit's forepaws when sitting on his haunches) Rabbit (hands on either side of head, fore-fingers pointing up) had a flea (snap finger in front of you as you "hop" your hand) upon his ear (point to ear).

Little Peter Rabbit had a flea upon his ear
Little Peter Rabbit had a flea upon his ear
And he flipped it (flip open hand as though flipping ear) till it flew (both hands fly away to right) away.

Sing entire song without action first time. Then each successive time add one action in place of a word until all action suggestions have been substituted.

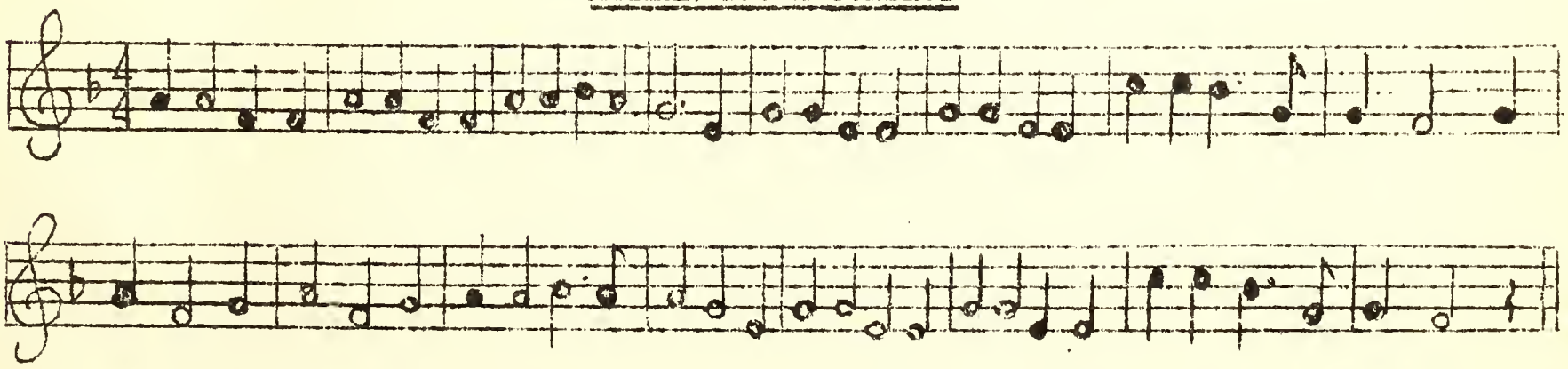
## JOHN BROWN'S BABY

Also sung to the tune, "Battle Hymn of the Republic"

John Brown's Baby had a cold upon his chest,
John Brown's Baby had a cold upon his chest,
John Brown's Baby had a cold upon his chest,
So they rubbed it with camphorated oil.

The verse is first sung without action. When singing it the second time the word "Baby" is omitted. Whenever this word is reached all the players make the motion of rocking a baby. For the third verse, the word "cold" is also omitted. The baby is rocked when the word "Baby" is reached, and a little cough is given instead of the word "cold." The fourth verse is similar to the third verse and singers also omit the word "chest." Instead of singing it, the players tap their chest with their open hand. During the fifth verse the word "rubbed" is dropped and a gentle rubbing movement of the chest is substituted. For the sixth verse, "camphorated oil" is omitted and a little sniff is given.

## MOTHER GOOSE CONTEST



Divide the group into two or more teams provided there are at least ten on a team, for the more the merrier. One team starts by singing a Mother Goose rhyme to the above tune. Instead of singing the last line, however, the players substitute the words, "And she threw it out the window," (motion with arms) and finish the verse in the following manner:

"Mary had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow
And everywhere that Mary went
She threw it out the window,
The window, the window.
She threw it out the window.
And everywhere that Mary went
(The third line of the nursery
rhyme is always repeated here.)
And she threw it out the window.

As soon as one team finishes another starts. A team is eliminated if it fails to start singing as soon as its turn comes, if the singers cannot agree on the choice of a rhyme, or if they sing one which has already been sung by another team. It is sometimes advisable to elect a team captain who makes final decision as to next song his team will sing.

## ROUNDS

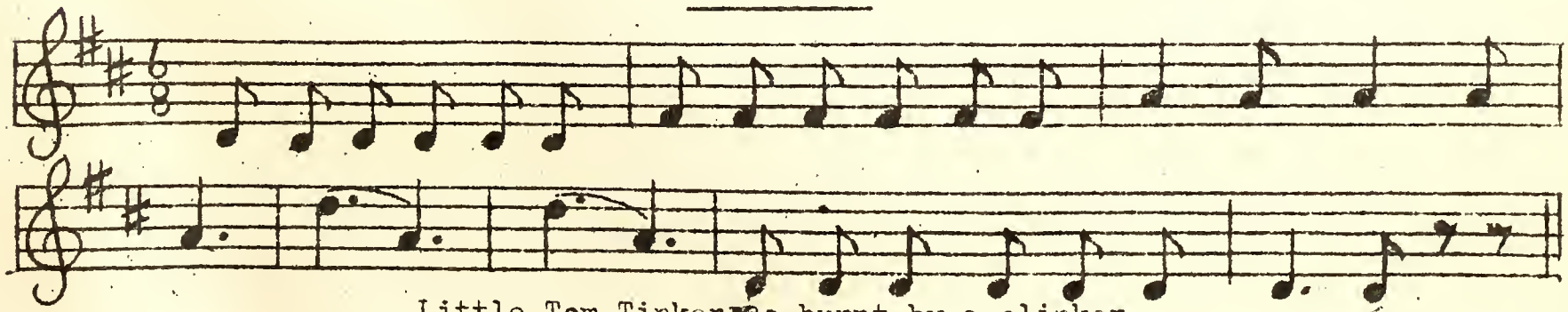
The songs which follow are suggested as rounds with two, four, or eight groups. First of all, teach the song to the entire group and suggest the actions before dividing the singers into groups. One should be careful in indicating where each group is to begin singing and how many times the round is to be sung. Ordinarily each round is sung four times through. Sometimes it is preferable to designate leaders who are to stand in front of each group and lead them.

## THREE BLIND MICE

Three blind mice, three blind mice,
See how they run, see how they run!
They all ran after the farmer's wife,
She cut off their tails with a carving knife,
Did ever you see such a sight in your life
As three blind mice.

On the word "three" the players are to hold up three fingers; put both hands to cover eyes on word "blind" and up to ears on the word "mice"; put one hand shading eyes on the word "see"; move hands and fingers to represent running on the word "run"; move hands in large wave-like motion to represent running on the words "ran after the farmer's wife"; strike hands like cymbals on "cut off their tails with a carving knife"; raise hands in exclamation on "did ever you see such a sight in your life." Repeat first part on "Three blind mice."

## TOM TINKER



Little Tom Tinker was burnt by a clinker
And he began to cry:-
Ma! Ma! Poor little innocent b'y.

Singers remain seated, but rise suddenly on "Ma," seat themselves and rise again and sit down quickly on second "Ma," as if Tommy sat on a hot coal.

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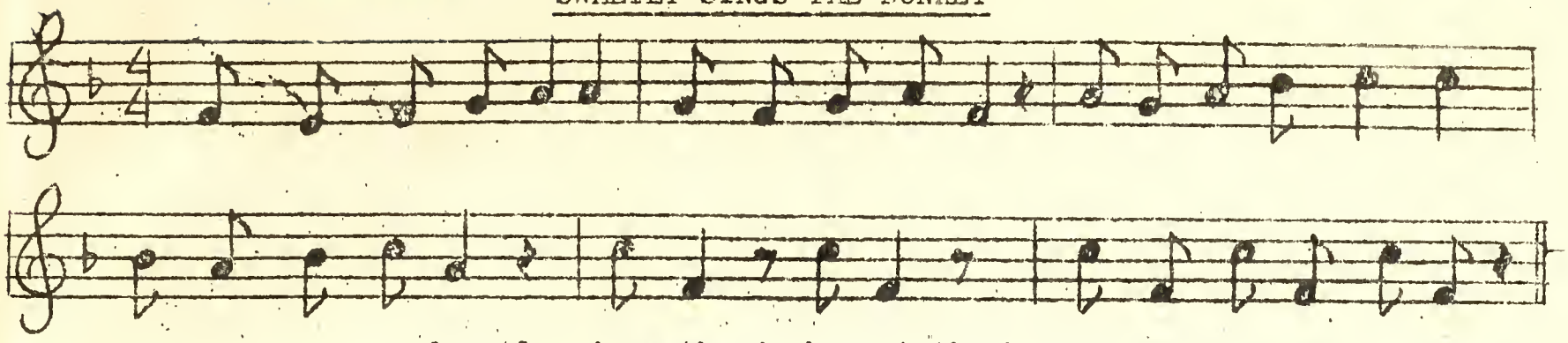
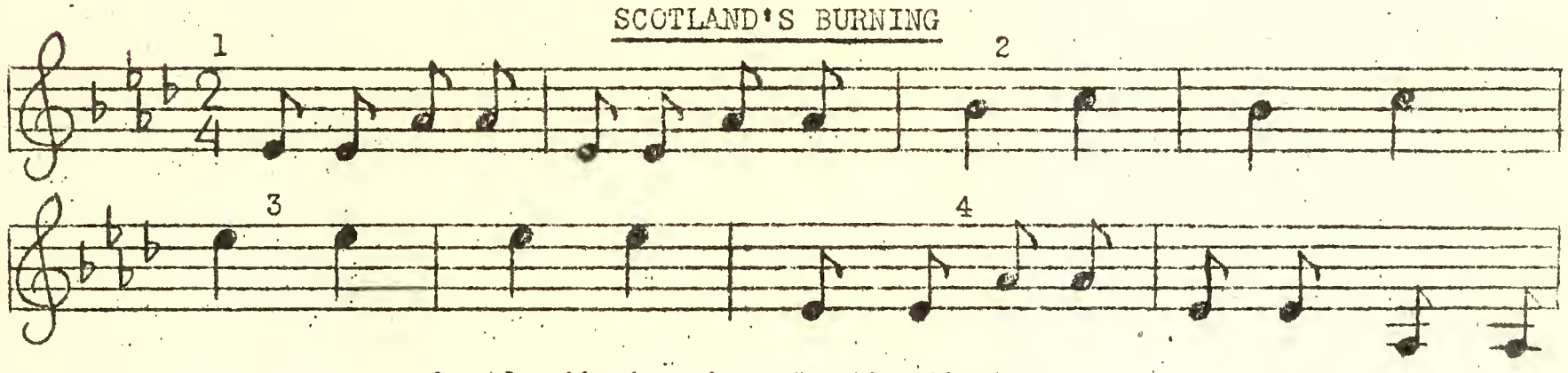
## SWEETLY SINGS THE DONKEY



Sweetly sings the donkey at the break of day;
If you do not feed him,
This is what he'll say:
Hee-haw! hee-haw!
Hee-haw! hee-haw! hee-haw!

On the "hee-haws" place thumbs to ears and wave fingers at each "hee-haw."

## SCOTLAND'S BURNING




Scotland's burning, Scotland's burning
Look out, look out!
Fire! fire! fire! fire!
Pour on water, pour on water!

"Scotland's burning, Scotland's burning" - turn to neighbor on one side then on other as if whispering very exciting news. "Look out, look out," - put hand to mouth as if shouting the news. "Fire, fire, fire, fire," - raise arms over head and lower to shoulders repeatedly as in great excitement. "Pour on water, pour on water," calmly and daintily pantomime pouring from a pitcher.

## ROW, ROW, ROW YOUR BOAT

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream;
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,
Life is but a dream.

Members of each team line up directly behind a captain placing their hands on the shoulders of the one in front. As each team starts, the players walk forward four steps, starting on right foot; then four steps backward. Repeat all. ~~Sing through~~ four times.

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